

ORAL HISTORY OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY  
INTERVIEWS WITH  
EDWIN A. SHELLEY

BY - CHARLES W. CRAWFORD  
TRANSCRIBER - BRENDA P. MEIER  
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE  
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INTERVIEWS WITH EDWIN A. SHELLEY

DECEMBER 16, 1971

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD

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ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE

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PLACE Knoxville, Tenn

DATE July 30, 1974

  
(Interviewee)

  
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THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THIS PROJECT IS "AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY." THE PLACE IS KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE. THE DATE IS DECEMBER 16, 1971, AND THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. EDWIN A. SHELLEY. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE, AND WAS TRANSCRIBED BY MRS. BRENDA P. MEIER.

CRAWFORD: Mr. Shelley, I suggest we start with background and work our way up to your TVA experiences.

SHELLEY: I'm a native of the Valley, born in Knoxville, Tennessee, but my family moved to the Muscle Shoals area when I was less than a year old. I attended schools there in Tuscumbia, Alabama, finishing high school in 1925. I then worked for Southern Railroad for two years and went to Florence State College, which was then called Florence Normal, for one year and then attended Maryville College in Maryville, Tennessee for three years, getting a bachelors degree in liberal arts. The following year I taught and coached athletics--one year in Town Creek, Alabama, which is the nearest little town to Wheeler Dam, incidentally; and the next year and a half taught and coached athletics in Tuscumbia, Alabama, at the high school.



I was doing this when TVA was created in 1933.

TVA, if the record is clear, had its origins with the properties of the government in Muscle Shoals, which I was quite familiar with, having witnessed the construction of Wilson Dam and the nitrate plants. This area was in a depression long before 1929 because of the real estate boom that occurred during the construction of the dam and the nitrate plants, and because its agriculture economy had gone to the bottom because of the cotton market. So TVA, to the people in that area, was a very exciting thing. They had been working for years and years to get some disposition of these properties. So we had a double depression, you might say, and the first activity of TVA that we witnessed was along in the summer and fall of 1933 when they began work on the rehabilitation of the nitrate plant--convert it to phosphate fertilizer operation--and also the construction of Wheeler Dam.

I applied for work with TVA in the fall of '33, and of course there were thousands of people around the doors of their employment office, but I was called for an interview in December of '33. The personnel representative said he had no openings, but thought he could find one for me and suggested that I come in and help them out for a few days. So when my Christmas vacation came in December I went out and started working for TVA for nothing, which I did for about two weeks before I got on the payroll, which was January 2, 1934.





I continued to work there at Wilson Dam as an Employment Interviewer for about a month and then was transferred to Wheeler Dam for about a month, and then was sent to Decatur, Alabama, to open an office to employ the workmen who were to clear the reservoir of timber--Wheeler Reservoir--and we employed there some four thousand employees. We had about 3600 of the four thousand employees working on clearing this reservoir. It was a very difficult job--very hard work. The men were paid at that time  $37\frac{1}{2}\text{¢}$  an hour. They were employed in crews of 60 men, with three sub-foremen and a crew foreman, and working under the most disagreeable conditions--mud, water to the hips at times--but we had thousands of applicants that we interviewed. We had three or four interviewers, and interviewed three or four hundred people a day, and normally would hire about 50 or 60 a day.

We had all kinds of people applying for jobs--former bank clerks and people who had been white collar workers, skilled mechanics, all kinds of people who had never done this kind of work, but who were desperately in need of employment. They would sleep outside the office on the sidewalk. Decatur was also a place that had been very hard hit. The "Decatur Story" by Barrett Shelton relates it so well. The city at that time (it had been twin cities of Albany and Decatur) was dried up. There was just no employment for them at all. So it was a great boon to them, and one of the most unforgettable experiences



that I had at TVA was how hard these men worked for 37½¢ an hour, men who had never done physical labor before.

I left there in the spring of 1935 to go to Iuka, Mississippi to open an office there to employ the people to clear Pickwick Reservoir, and here we tried something new where the employees would work every other week. We were employing people with rural backgrounds--primarily farmers--and with the Social and Economic Division of TVA and with Dr. George Gant, aside from the project we developed an application form which not only gave essential information for employment purposes, but also social and economic data about the applicant's farming operation, the idea being that if employed he could work one week for TVA and continue his farming operation the other week; that the cash they could earn from the TVA work would help them improve their farming facilities.

In order to have this understood we arranged meetings throughout the reservoir area at school houses and crossroads where Dr. Gant and I would explain the application and how to fill it out and what we were trying to do. As the project continued and came to a close, well, of course, the Social and Economic Division surveyed the results of the economic improvement that the employees had gained through their work with TVA. Dr. Gant could report better on the results (and it could be documented of course in TVA's file) was not particularly successful, but it did have one other purpose to help the people





in the region, and that was to provide employment to twice as many people as we had been doing otherwise.

Following this, I went to Pickwick Dam in 1937 for about a year as a personnel officer, and from there to Chickamauga Dam as a personnel officer.

CRAWFORD: Where did you go in 1937, sir?

SHELLEY: Pickwick Dam. And at Chickamauga I also had an office in Dayton, Tennessee where we employed and handled the employment of the reservoir clearance crews for Chickamauga Reservoir.

I left Chickamauga in 1940 and came to Knoxville, where I was to be in the employment branch, but actually I didn't begin work because preparations were being made to build Cherokee Dam under an accelerated schedule because of the war, and although the Cherokee project had not yet been authorized they were doing certain exploratory work. I went immediately to Jefferson City and began employing people for some of the preliminary work in July, and the project was authorized, I think, about the end of July. This was the first of TVA's wartime rush, emergency projects. The power was needed primarily by the aluminum company.

CRAWFORD: Was this Cherokee Dam?



SHELLEY: Cherokee Dam. This project was placed on an accelerated schedule and the forces were put together very rapidly. Working a 7-day week almost from the beginning, the dam was completed, which I think the records will show, in about 16 months, which was a new world record for completion of a project of that size. It was a hectic experience, of course, for everyone. Yet, it was done quite efficiently, with very little waste, and was one of the best work forces I think we had ever assembled. And as I say it was the first of the emergency projects such as Douglas, which was actually completed in 13 months, and then the Fontana and Hiwassee projects were also emergency projects.

Before I left Cherokee in 1943--in the last year I was there--I was then coming to Knoxville--commuting--first two days each week, and then three and four days a week, and finally five days a week, with just one day at Cherokee the last year because the employment office in Knoxville was very busy and needed me.

One little aside I might mention--I was probably one of the last people in TVA to get a five-day week. When I left Iuka, Mississippi we were on a five and a half-day week, and the week after I left, why that office went on a five-day week. Pickwick was still on five and a half. When I went to Chickamauga, the same thing happened at Pickwick; they went on a five-day week very soon after I left. When I left



Chickamauga--the project was closed down; it was completed. I closed down that office. I came to Cherokee and, of course, worked seven days a week, and I was getting paid for six. I was getting so tired of this commuting from Jefferson City to Knoxville that I asked my boss to let me give up that sixth day's pay and come to Knoxville so I could get on a five-day week. Well, a few weeks after I got to Knoxville, the Knoxville office was put on a five and a half-day week, with no extra pay for the half day.

CRAWFORD: Was that the regular wartime schedule?

SHELLY: It was at that time--a five and a half-day week.

Later they did arrange to pay us for the half day on Saturday, but they were a long time getting to it. I worked in the employment division there until about March of '43. This was the second time that I had come to Knoxville to be stationed permanently. And by the Spring of '43, the head of our office at Wilson Dam went into military service and things were in a mess down there. My boss asked me to go to Wilson Dam to take charge of that office, so I transferred to Wilson Dam in March of 1943.

There again they were in a wartime situation, with very real problems of staffing the chemical plants. The most difficult job they had was operating carbide furnaces, which





were old furnaces that had been used during the original process. They made carbide, and this was urgently needed for synthetic rubber production. The furnaces were old and it was a disagreeable place to work and it was very difficult to keep employees at work, particularly on Saturdays and weekends. We had a number of Negroes who worked with those furnaces--in charge of shoving in the coke and limestone--and on Saturdays or weekends, particularly, they just wouldn't show up. I had a Negro employment officer--personnel officer--in my office. It was a regular occurrence to him to have to get out on Saturday night and scour the pool rooms and locate enough people to keep the furnaces going.

In July of 1944 I went into the Navy and came back to TVA here in Knoxville in the spring of 1946, where I headed up what was called the Examining Section of the Employment Division. I came back as Assistant Chief Personnel Officer. Glen Dooley, whom you have interviewed I think, was Chief Personnel Officer at the time and we were responsible for all employment and all the field personnel offices--personnel relations, classification of jobs, training and so forth. About 1952 (I'm not sure of the date) Mr. Dooley transferred to construction, and I took over as Chief Personnel Officer for three or four years, and I became Director of Personnel in 1956. In 1961 I was made Assistant General Manager and served in that job until July of 1969, when I retired.



CRAWFORD: Well, you have had a varied career with TVA. As a matter of fact, you worked about all up and down the Valley.

SHELLEY: Yes, and of course during the time when I was Chief Personnel Officer, I was responsible for offices all over the Valley which I had to visit and keep up with and with all the projects. We had rather an unusual position in personnel in TVA compared to many other division, we worked with every division in TVA--not only the service division but all the program divisions--and the philosophy that I got was to help them do their job, which meant that we had to know what their job was and what they were trying to accomplish. In other words, we had to understand their program, or we wanted and were supposed to--tried to--so where a person in one division in TVA might not be too familiar with what's going on elsewhere, we worked with all the people in TVA and had some idea of what their mission was, what their problems were, and what things we could do to help.

In addition, TVA's philosophy from the very beginning on the organization of the Division of Personnel was a strong management arm by all divisions and by top management. The Division of Personnel in 1933 was a very unusual thing. This was largely due to the influence and capabilities of our first Personnel Director, Dr. Reeves, and his assistant, Gordon





Clapp. They had broad vision and saw what this could mean, so the Division of Personnel was highly respected by top management in those days; it was quite powerful in its influence and, I think, generally was respected.

Gordon Clapp, to me, is Mr. TVA. Of all the people we had in TVA from the very beginning, including Dave Lilienthal and other directors, Gordon Clapp's philosophy, I think, was the greatest influence on TVA in its early days. Lilienthal's contribution was great, but from a management standpoint--management philosophy--Gordon Clapp was the man who was feeding ideas to Lilienthal. Lilienthal had a great deal of ability, aggressiveness and the necessary egotism to put these things into effect and to fight and battle for them, and to recognize a good idea and to use it. But many of these things came from Gordon Clapp, and he recognized Gordon Clapp's ability. He, I think, was Mr. TVA, and his influence on many things--many of the important decisions that TVA made in the early days resulted from the influence of Gordon Clapp, Reeves, many other people--Lilienthal, of course. But the one who first made the decisions, and some of the early major decisions, as you know, are documented, I believe by Lawrence Durisch and Bob Lowery. Have you met Lawrence Durisch?

CRAWFORD: Yes sir, I have talked with Dr. Durisch about a year ago, I believe.



SHELLEY: Well, such things as making the decision to do our construction work by force account rather than by contract was a major early decision that TVA made. It made it different and made it much more efficient, I think.

CRAWFORD: Why did that help so much?

SHELLEY: I remember reasons from the standpoint of efficiency. If you are doing a major project by contract it means that you must have your plans and specifications drawn before you can let a bid for a contract. If you are doing the work yourself you can get enough of your plans completed so that you can start and then just stay ahead of it a little, but it can save you months--sometimes even years--so it was time. But there were many reasons. Another, of course, is that by doing its construction work by force account rather than contract, TVA could utilize the skills and experience gained on one of our projects and transfer it to others, as well as using major equipment and transferring major equipment from one project to another. If you contract with someone to build a dam, they have to buy a concrete mixing plant and much heavy equipment--cranes and so on--and those things could be written off at the end of the job. But if you had another project starting, it could be moved there and used again and the continued use of the skills of men and equipment.



CRAWFORD: And you did that, didn't you, as you moved from one dam to the next--up and down the Valley?

SHELLEY: Oh, yes. We always had a nucleus of experienced people to start the next project, and it goes, of course, through the whole organization of TVA, from the service agencies and design groups and everything else, that you could do this. But it was quite an acceptance of responsibility to do this as compared to the traditional method because it meant you had to deal with the problems of handling a large force of employees, but TVA welcomed this. The major decision that was made early was to recognize the right of employees to belong to unions of their own choosing. Here again, the history of TVA's relationships with organized labor are well documented too, and this was one of the most satisfying experiences that I had working with TVA in personnel work was the responsibility that employee organizations exercised and demonstrated in responding to a management that tried to be fair and honest with them in dealing with employees.

CRAWFORD: You encouraged the development of unions, didn't you?

SHELLEY: Yes, the unions in this area were particularly weak at that time. The depression--many reasons led to



this--it had not been an industrial economy anyhow and during the depression, of course, why the unions were very weak, but excellent leadership developed among the unions. Now here I think, again, it was the vision, particularly of Gordon Clapp, that laid the foundation and the development of this employee relationship policy. TVA began very early in this, with its first statement on an employee relationship policy in the very early thirties, and of course, the formal arrangements--bargaining arrangements--were rather slow in one respect and fast in another in developing, in machinery that goes on with that, but it led, of course, to the signing of a general agreement, which is the first contract that a government agency had ever signed with a group of unions in 1941. This led later, of course, to similar arrangements in later years with the white collar employees.

CRAWFORD: TVA was a very successful agency, developed in the thirties. Do you believe that its personnel policy was one of the reasons for its early success?

SHELLEY: Well, I would have to. Having been involved in it, I, of course, naturally feel very strongly that it was one of the reasons where you see the success. We were very fortunate in the beginning of TVA that we could draw from





a reservoir of talent which was nationwide because of the national economy and the depression years, and brought together a most unusual team of people. In the early days, of course, there were some crackpots and so on, but they didn't last too long. A very high morale situation existed because people not only were glad to have a job, but were enthusiastic about what they were doing and about the management of TVA, which gave them some voice in conditions that affected them and a very high degree of loyalty developed--a very high identification with what TVA was doing--not just their job, but with what TVA as a whole was doing. So it had a great affect on TVA's success and its efficiency, and TVA, for that reason I think--that and many others--was able to build Douglas Dam in thirteen months during the war period and things of this sort.

CRAWFORD: Of course, you had a good deal of rehearsal in dam building by the time you got to Douglas?

SHELLEY: Oh, yes, but still that was less than the two years which TVA was authorized when we started work on Douglas.

CRAWFORD: And I believe you set some records in that time too?

SHELLEY: Oh, yes, oh yes. But these people felt a very high identification with TVA. I still see these men--iron



workers or carpenters or various craftsmen. In fact, I saw one yesterday and he recognized me, that I had employed on a job, and they say now: "We built Cherokee Dam. We built Douglas Dam." And they still talk about those experiences they had. And these construction men worked construction all over the country--many of them--and then they would have long periods of continuity with TVA, but still there were times when they would work elsewhere. They talk about the TVA jobs--which is sort of a self-identification as being a part of it, and a part of them is in that project--in a different way than they talk about building a building in Washington, D. C. or a tunnel somewhere around Lake Michigan.

CRAWFORD: Why did they have that feeling?

SHELLEY: Well, there was generally the enthusiasm that sort of permeated a project and what TVA was doing sort of captured their imagination, and TVA made efforts too to keep the employees informed in every way they could through their organizations. And the employee representatives--most of them--were assigned to work just with TVA, and they thought it was their program as much as TVA's. It was a public program; it was not being done for profit. They could see the results occurring in the Valley, not only in the new transmission lines and distribution systems and cheaper electric power, but they could



see the fields beginning to green up with pasture and they were aware that TVA was doing this--doing reforestation work--and that flood control was accomplished, and they felt a part of forestry work as much as they did the construction work, and vice-versa. So it was a simple program, and yet a complex one which the average employee knew about and felt he was a part of it, so I think this is one of the great things.

We had a study done, with TVA's cooperation, by Dr. Orvis Collins from the University of Chicago, I believe, after the war, and they had done some others on this very thing. He interviewed employees throughout TVA. One of the things that I recall in that study was he found a higher identification of TVA and knowledge of what TVA was doing, from one end of the Valley to the other, from TVA employees than he did in other studies of other companies between one end of the building and the other. It was this matter of the program and feeling that you were part of it. Some of that still exists. I don't think to the same extent. Of course, the times are quite different.

CRAWFORD: You had a real crusade then, in the 1930's?

SHELLEY: Yes, it was a matter of a very unusual program coming at a particular time, and that's why there have been



no more TVA's in the United States. It couldn't happen again, and didn't happen again because you had an unusual number of circumstances occurring at one time--the depression years, properties that were here, a river that needed full development, a whole valley that was under-developed, a good yield program--those sets of circumstances that have never come together again. They have in some under-developed nations, as we know, where they had some things that emulated TVA there.

CRAWFORD: And I know that TVA has been studied by people from these under-developed nations, and some of the former TVA personnel, at any rate, have served as consultants.

SHELLEY: Yes, many of them.









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CRAWFORD: Mr. Shelley, let's go over a few details of some of the work that you did, and I would like to start first with your work at Wheeler Dam. What impressions did you have when you went into the Personnel Office, I believe, at the beginning of 1934, when you first went to work at the office?

SHELLEY: The first impression at Wheeler Dam, at that time, was mud--from one end of the project to the other--it was mud. It was in February of 1934 and work was going full speed and new roads were being cut, but you couldn't get through the roads to an office without wading through mud, so that may be why I recall that particular thing. It was cold and disagreeable, but in spite of that there was still the impression of a beehive of activity, with things happening



and still hundreds of people coming under great difficulty because few people had cars of their own and they had to resort to many different ways to get to a project that was that remote from the major highway. The desperation in the eyes of these people looking for jobs; the exhilaration when they found they were going to get a job; the way they appreciated their job, and then how hard they worked to keep it--to get a paycheck.

People who didn't witness the problems of the depression can't understand it. My own children can't understand it, and I'm sure you can't, but it was something in spite of all that that renewed my faith a great deal in the American people--that people stuck together--they understood each other. No one had anything much, and there was a great sharing that went on among those who had a little in sharing with others who didn't in many ways.

One man would get a job, and maybe all he could do for the next man was to get him out to the project so that he could be interviewed to try to get a job, but people were drawn together by the adversity. And the one impression that I had of Wheeler--and I was only there a little over a month--was mud, people working--glad to be working--and of course this sharing that we saw. We were working then four six-hour shifts, as I recall, so, many people were required. And it required more people to build a project then than it does now



because we didn't have but very little of the type of heavy construction that is now available. It took much, more more handling and it appeared to be a great area of confusion of people moving equipment, slipping and sliding, and noise, and so on.

CRAWFORD: It was probably fortunate for the people that you did require so much man labor?

SHELLEY: Oh, yes, and then, of course, the four shift schedule was deliberately to employ more people. Another thing that I might have mentioned earlier (let's see, it began at Norris) TVA established its first wage schedules arbitrarily on its own. It's now done by negotiations, but while the labor rate was established it was only  $37\frac{1}{2}\text{¢}$  an hour, and as I recall the skilled rate was \$1.00 an hour. This was higher than was being paid for what little work might have been going in other places in the Valley. It was a very low wage, but it was a little better because the other wages that were being paid were not their equivalent at all.

There is one story that I have heard. At Norris one of the superintendents told me later that he had a man from around Cove Creek--a mining man--who got a job as a laborer in the warehouse and he was getting  $37\frac{1}{2}\text{¢}$  an hour. He got his first check and told this man the next day, "When





I got home I told my wife to take that check and get it to the bank the first thing in the morning and cash it because they are paying some of those people out there a dollar an hour, and even the government can't stand that very long." So it was a little better wage, and it was a good job for them.

There was somewhat the same thing when I went to Decatur. As I said, all kinds of people applied for those jobs, using the axe and saw to clear the reservoir. We had an office on the main street in what was the old town of Albany, in what had been a bank building, and people would take cardboard from cartons and spread them out and sleep on the sidewalk to be the first in line the next morning for an interview.

CRAWFORD: TVA jobs obviously meant a great deal, and I suppose that was the first impression a lot of people in the region had of TVA--that is was bringing employment.

SHELLEY: Yes. The people in the Valley, particularly in Alabama, had been aware of the potential for something developing out of Wilson Dam and the nitrate plants because there had been all the other proposals for utilizing them, including the effort of Henry Ford to develop it, and so they had been looking to this as a real hope that something might start developing in the Valley.



CRAWFORD: Wasn't this unusual to have a dual purpose in personnel policy, not only to get the work done, but to give maximum employment to help the people in the area? For example, your plan of having employees only work every other week?

SHELLEY: Yes, I think it was quite unusual, particularly for this type of work. I am sure there were other places in industry where there had been some different schools of spreading the work to avoid layoffs, but it was quite unusual, I think, for major construction work to do something of this sort. Of course, there were some construction supervisors who were not totally in sympathy with it, although they understood the reasons, but they knew that they could obtain probably some better efficiency by using fewer men and not having the constant shift changes back and forth.

CRAWFORD: Was the plan generally well received in the area?

SHELLEY: Oh, yes, quite. It was given full, public support and approval.

CRAWFORD: How did you select people for the work? Did you set up certain questionnaires? Did you establish certain definitions for the kind of people you wanted?



SHELLEY: The first thing TVA did early in 1933--or I guess it must have been in the fall of 1933--they scheduled an examination which was given at schools all over the Valley--not just in the drainage basin, but outside of the drainage basin. I don't recall the number of counties, but they set up a register (it was called a Form 10 Examination), and it was given by high school teachers. We paid them small amounts--given on a Saturday, I think. All of the people were placed on this register. The score didn't mean much, if anything. It has been a long time since I have seen this, but it was sort of a mechanical aptitude test. But in order to be eligible to work on the project a person had to be on that register; it didn't make much difference about what the score was--we gave very little, if any, weight to the score, but a person had to be on that register in order to be employed. This was a very wise move, and we limited our employment to those people. Of course, practically every eligible applicant took that examination. The major reason for that was if TVA had not done this--this was done before I came to work with TVA, although as a school teacher, I participated in it--it would have meant that construction workers from all over the United States would have flooded into our projects, and some of them would have been more experienced because this was not an industrial economy, and it would have created additional problems of those people who would have flooded into this area like the Okies



going to California who did not get jobs, so our employment was limited to people on that list.

Then we sent an interview team out in the Valley at specific times and locations, by notice, and here the interviewer would get elaboration on the information in the employee's application about his skills and abilities. We recorded this on a card--the additional information--and the interviewer would give them some kind of rating--qualitative rating--on his skill. Then these were classified occupationally in the various field offices. As requests were received for certain skills, why the interviewers would review their occupational cards in that particular register and make their selections, and call the ones that were selected for employment.

TVA had another thing, too, which was unusual for construction. In the very beginning we gave physical examinations to people selected for employment. This was not the practice at all on heavy construction at that time elsewhere.

CRAWFORD: Did you have your own medical staff to do that?

SHELLEY: Yes, from the very beginning.

CRAWFORD: What about people for higher grades--higher classifications of employment--did you devise certain questionnaires or standards for them?





SHELLEY: Well, there was a different application for what you might classify, broadly, as the white collar worker, including supervisory, management people, and engineers, and all these others. It required a little more detailed information, and here again we did something different from what might have been done in federal service under the Civil Service. We did not establish closed registers. Say in Civil Service they would hold an examination and establish a register for electrical engineers for a certain period, and give them a score, and then, you know, select from the highest three.

TVA's employment examining officer would review this application and I guess they still do this with some modification; the system is still used. Regardless of what the applicant had applied for he would be given a rating on broad occupational registers for whatever he appeared to be qualified for, and all positions for which he might be qualified. And a central register was kept for those types of employees here in Knoxville, rather than on the projects, and they were not limited to the Valley; that was the difference in the trades and labor. Then when a request was received for someone, the examining officer usually in the same occupational group who had done the original examining, reviewed his register and selected the best persons, or those who appeared best, from his occupational register cards and then would look at the complete files, which would include reference checks and those things, and select the best ones and



certify those to the appointing officer supervisors--one who employed the persons. That person could then select any one in that group, and rather than being limited to three, why there were five or ten, or maybe even fifteen they could choose from. And in this way, we felt--and still do--that you got a better matching of skills to the job, with the full participation of the man who is responsible for getting the work done.

CRAWFORD: What was the highest level at which you recruited personnel? Was new management brought in outside of the personnel office--were they recruited elsewhere?

SHELLEY: We were responsible for all. Of course, there were a great many positions filled from within, but even in selecting someone to fill a job as assistant head of a division, it required approval of the Division of Personnel. If a vacancy occurred for a head of a division, the General Manager would ask the Division of Personnel for its recommendations. Very often there was an assistant there who might be ready, but even rather than just looking at that one man, the Division of Personnel would also provide files of other people who might be qualified, so the organization was not built from just within each division.



There was much movement from one division to another as talent moved from one position to another, particularly in management types of jobs. The employment papers and authorization papers had to have the approval of the Division of Personnel, and there were many occasions where a division would want to move someone into another job, one of their own employees, which was not approved by the Division of Personnel. And they were sustained in it because there were some better qualified persons somewhere else in TVA, or maybe even outside that should have gone in that job.

CRAWFORD: You tried to give as broad a choice as possible, then, for each man?

SHELLEY: Oh, yes. This was the whole idea; that the selections be made from the broadest possible area of consideration.

CRAWFORD: Did TVA have a general policy, where possible, of promoting its own employees?

SHELLEY: Yes, all things being equal, employees were promoted over bringing in people from the outside, but it was not limited to that. It was quite clear that if the best person for the job was from the outside, why the person came from the



outside, and it still prevails, although there is less of it done as TVA has matured because they have, by necessity, developed a broader base to select from, providing training and management-development programs and things of this sort in order to have a base rather than to have to do its recruiting from the outside. It makes for good morale and better career opportunities.

CRAWFORD: What did TVA do for education of its own employees of developing them for more responsible positions?

SHELLEY: For many years TVA was heavily involved in educational activities; in fact we operated schools for the children of employees at Wilsom Dam, and also operated a school at Norris when it was a TVA town, but in addition some construction projects, and this was an unusual thing for construction too, because at that time when you built a big dam, you had to build a village. People didn't commute as they do now; you didn't have mobile homes; and you had a village and you also had barracks for employees who didn't bring their families. And we had training officers in the Personnel Office; also in the Educational Relations offices in the camp management community--organizations, in some cases, to operate schools for the children, but a wide range of education opportunities were made available to employees in almost every area.





We started an apprentice program, for example, early in TVA. And this is one of the outstanding stories in TVA, which is well documented--the development of additional skills of mechanics which was needed in the Valley, not only by TVA but for the development of the Valley, which was part of TVA's job. But special classes were conducted from these projects, and still are although not to as great an extent as they were because people don't live there now--they commute--but even then blueprint reading, and various other types of training programs and classes that employees, particularly those who were staying in the barracks, away from their homes--something for them to do.

And TVA's construction camps were not like the old construction camps where they were ringed around with beer halls, and you know, pretty rowdy places, but they were nice communities to live in. I lived in one of them. But there was training, there were classes for white collar workers, and if there was interest and a group of typists who wanted to develop their skills in shorthand, why we'd get a class going for them--whatever interest there was. And of course, in addition, for a number of years later TVA had educational relations' specialists working with the public school systems in the Valley to help them in development of their curriculum and other problems that they had that TVA might help with. They had educational programs through the agricultural development programs for the



rural people and of course, one of the early decisions that TVA made, too, was not to duplicate existing organizations. This is best illustrated by the agricultural program when TVA had a program to introduce new fertilizers and to improve the agriculture in the Valley. Rather than put its own people into the Valley, they worked out arrangements with the Valley extension services--agricultural colleges--to use their people and subsidize them so that they could hire an additional assistant county agent or something of this sort who would work with them. This was a very wise decision that TVA made.

CRAWFORD: TVA worked with the people and communities as much as possible then?

SHELLEY: Yes, particularly in the rural areas where they went through the county and the state extension services.

CRAWFORD: What sort of headquarters did you have when you went to Iuka in '35 to recruit people for the Pickwick project?

SHELLEY: Well, the major organization, of course, was the construction group that was there--the Reservoir Clearance Division it was called--to supervise and clear the reservoir and supporting divisions--Personnel was the major



one; Land Acquisition for acquiring land to be cleared; the Maps and Surveys Branch which was doing the surveys and making reports on the amount of the acreage cleared and so on, so it was a rather small group of probably 50 people, I suppose, in the office itself. And I don't recall the number of people we had in the field, but probably 1800--something of this sort--maybe 2000.

CRAWFORD: And you had a construction village there?

SHELLEY: No, it was a small town, and the employees, you see, in this case, lived in the area and commuted to the job because the job moved every day. As they cleared an area, you know, they moved up the reservoir and they had to commute to the job because they were in a different place every day. And the employees in the office itself, in the headquarters, lived in the little town of Iuka, Mississippi, which was an unusual little place. It was practically owned by one man. He owned the general mercantile store which sold everything from fertilizer to furniture and groceries, and spread to the bank--he owned that building--and owned the building the post office was in. One of his sons had the Ford agency and one had the Chevrolet agency. One of his daughters-in-law, I think, ran the drug store. He built houses--little cheap houses--for the TVA people who came in, rented them to us very



reasonably, and we had our headquarters in what had been an old hotel--The Mineral Springs Hotel. It was one of the old-town spas and people would come--bring their trunks--and stay two or three weeks to drink the mineral waters in the little park there. This hotel, of course, had not been in operation for many years. As I recall, the building was assessed for \$1800; TVA was paying him \$300 a month rent for that old building, but they were very nice offices. It had real thick walls, and it was cool and pleasant in the summer time, which was unusual for those days before air conditioning units--better than a lot of space I occupied in some places.

CRAWFORD: Let's go through some of the places you worked, and I wanted to check about your work on Chickamauga Dam, Mr. Shelley. What was your work there and how did the personnel policies differ from what they had been earlier, or did you have changes in them by that time?

SHELLEY: Well, I was doing about the same thing at Chickamauga.

At first I was assistant to the head of the office, and then later took over the office at Chickamauga Dam, where we were handling the employment, labor relations, classification and training work for the forces that were building Chickamauga Dam as distinct from the work that was going on in Chattanooga with the TVA offices there--also the clearing of the reservoir.





Nothing particularly different in our personnel policies as far as construction practices at Chickamauga over what we had had at Pickwick or Wheeler. Things were fairly well established--policies were fairly well established and operating--and no major changes occurred, as I recall, at Chickamauga. Training programs were more refined and more regularly scheduled, and so on, so there was nothing particularly unusual about our part of the work there at Chickamauga.

CRAWFORD: Did you have a couple of offices then? Were you working in different places?

SHELLEY: My major office was at the dam, and then for a period of time we had an office at Dayton, Tennessee, where we handled the employment primarily for reservoir clearance, but also for the Construction and Maintenance Division, it was called then, which was doing the road relocation and railroad and highway relocation, and work of that sort in the reservoir. And I had a man there in charge of my office and a couple of people there to handle that work.

CRAWFORD: You still had no trouble finding personnel, I suppose?

SHELLY: No, we didn't really run into difficulties--I didn't--until I went to Cherokee because it was a rush job



(this was in 1940). Employment had picked up because of the emergency situation throughout the country, and we needed to get our people--needed more of them because it was a rush job; needed them quickly--to get them on the job--and the major difficulty there was not so much in the trades and labor personnel; it was in building our engineering forces. But within a few months this was pretty well settled--that is the difficult part of it--and then part of the time I was working at Knoxville on the same kinds of problems of recruiting, particularly employees throughout the Valley on other construction projects.

TVA, during that year--'40 to '43--went up to about 43,000 employees, and there were difficulties in other projects, particularly Fontana, in getting skilled workmen because of the remote location and competition from other defense work. One of the major problems, of course, was in engineering and other supervisory type personnel that we needed for all the projects.

CRAWFORD: You had a sudden change in your career in 1940 when you came to Knoxville, but didn't remain very long. You came here with the intention of staying in Knoxville, for a while, as employment officer, didn't you?

SHELLEY: Yes.

CRAWFORD: When had the decision been made for the Cherokee Dam? I know the war was not underway at that time.



SHELLEY: Well, it came very quickly. Of course, TVA had on the drawing boards potential projects in various areas of the Valley. I'm not sure how quickly this one heated up, but it was within, I would say, a span of just a few months that the decision was made to go ahead. Of course, I'm not sure of the sequence of events because I was not in Knoxville, but my guess in sequence was a request from, particularly Alcoa, or indication of their power needs, and TVA's ability to meet it and TVA's assessment of the quickest way to get that power, and a judgment being made that Cherokee was one possibility to provide it quickly, and then TVA making a request for funds to the Bureau of the Budget and to the Congress. And I am not sure of my facts, but my guess is that this was a supplemental request. I'm almost positive it was not included in the budget that had been presented the year before. And I think the whole time span from the time of the decision to go ahead would probably be just a few months.

CRAWFORD: How long did you remain in Knoxville before you received your assignment to Cherokee?

SHELLEY: I never sat down to a desk. I was on the payroll in Knoxville for probably a month, until after the project was authorized, but I was commuting and working in the Cherokee area during that time.



CRAWFORD: Where did you make your headquarters for the Cherokee project?

SHELLEY: At Jefferson City, originally, for a temporary period until an office was built on the project itself, which was just a few miles out from Jefferson City.

CRAWFORD: Did you have special problems in getting workmen at that time?

SHELLEY: We had problems in getting them as rapidly as we needed them for a period of time because we needed so many and we needed them so quickly. The particular problems were getting engineering personnel, particularly inspectors and civil engineers, and some supervisory personnel that we needed very quickly.

CRAWFORD: How long did you remain on the Cherokee Dam?

SHELLEY: I stayed on the payroll at that office until about February of '42, but the last year I was working more in Knoxville than I was in Cherokee.

CRAWFORD: What were you doing back in Knoxville at that time?





SHELLEY: Trying to do the same thing recruiting personnel for other projects and other divisions of TVA-- engineering personnel and some of the scarce classifications that were getting to be difficult because defense work was picking up all over. Another problem we had during this time, of course, was selective service. Our employees were being drafted and we were engaged in a massive amount of work here of weeding out and determining those employees for who we should seek deferments.

CRAWFORD: What policy did you follow in seeking deferments?

SHELLEY: The general policy is that we would seek deferments for those people whom it would be quite difficult to replace. The policy was different during the period before Pearl Harbor. You know, we had a year there under the Defense Act which Selective Service was operating and which was somewhat easier to get deferments. I mean the requirements were not as strict as after we were actually engaged in the war. And then it was a question of establishing how difficult it would be to replace a person and the importance of the job he was doing; as to whether it was a key job or a job that you could train someone to do rather quickly.

Generally we sought deferments in those classifications that TVA was already short in because we were engaged in defense



work too, in the projects that we were building to provide power for defense industries, the work we were doing at the Shoals, not only carbide for synthetic rubber production, but also phosphorous which was being used primarily for defense. About two-thirds, I think, of all the phosphorous used for the military was manufactured during this time at Wilsom Dam.

CRAWFORD: Did you ever run short of personnel in the wartime period?

SHELLEY: We had shortages in some classifications all during the wartime period.

CRAWFORD: Did it delay your construction programs any?

SHELLEY: Probably, but not significantly because they improvised. We might have done them a little quicker, but most of them we brought in on schedule, and sometimes ahead of schedule. It might have been further ahead of schedule if we had not had some of the shortages that occurred. It was a rather frantic situation, but much of it I missed because I went into the service myself in '44 although things were leveling off somewhat by the spring of '44.



CRAWFORD: Can you give some information, briefly, about your career in the Navy after you went in in '44, Mr. Shelley?

SHELLEY: I had one set of orders in the Navy, which is rather unusual. I never stood a watch in the Navy, which is unusual too, even for an office worker. I thought when I went in that I was going into the amphibious forces, but I was ordered first to Washington to what was called the Office of District Civilian Personnel in the Office of Civilian Personnel, and I stayed there a couple of weeks.

And on the same set of orders, I was sent to Charleston, South Carolina, the sixth Naval District Headquarters, where I was Assistant District Civilian Personnel Director for the Sixth Naval District, and I served in that job until I was released in '46. My job there was an entirely different job from the regular civilian personnel officers at the naval bases. The primary job which we had, and covered the whole district, was working on manpower problems of the naval defense contractors throughout the district and this was to go into a shipyard or some other place, help them set up a training program to develop the kinds of employees they needed, to help them with their selective service problems--all of the personnel problems that they were having, just like TVA was having or other offices were having. Also we helped them in expediting material. This



was an unusual thing to be in personnel but we were to try to keep the contractor going--keep him operating, which meant not only people, but materials. If there were shortages in brass, why we worked with the Washington office and other offices trying to get the raw materials and the products that they needed to keep the munitions plant or shipyard, or whatever it might be operating; or it might have been just building wooden pallets, so it was a sort of paper-work job in a way, but it involved traveling over the whole district and working with the companies to help them with their problems. Most of them had never had personnel divisions, so we had to help them with this. We had to help some of them set up systems for this.

CRAWFORD: When you retired, then, from your naval service, Mr. Shelley, did you become Chief Personnel Officer at that time?

SHELLEY: No, I was Assistant Chief Personnel Officer, and I'm not sure it was as soon as I came back, but very soon after, I'm pretty sure. And there I was responsible for the Employment Division and examining the applications that came in and helping to get them classified, and also all the field office personnel heads reported to me.

CRAWFORD: What year, then, did you become Chief Personnel Officer?





SHELLEY: I'm not sure, but I believe it was about 1952.

CRAWFORD: From 1946 until 1951, then, you were with the Personnel Office in Knoxville?

SHELLEY: Yes, and in 1956 when Harry Case left, I was made Director of Personnel and served in that job until '61.

CRAWFORD: Did you have any special problems or changes of policy in TVA personnel at that time?

SHELLEY: There was one major change which occurred soon after I became Chief Personnel Officer. Up until that time the Division of Personnel in its field offices was responsible for all the personnel programs--employment, classification, personnel and labor relations, and training--and during the early part of the time that I became Chief Personnel Officer we went through what we call decentralization.

The personnel officers were established in each of the major divisions in TVA where that person who reported to the head of the division--power, or whatever the division--became responsible for a great portion of the classification of work, for the training, and for much of the labor relations, and our personnel officers were reduced in number. Many of



our people moved into these jobs. There were a number of reasons for this. One was to get this as close to the division head--the supervisory line--the ones who were making the decisions, as possible--get it as close to them as possible and to hold them responsible and accountable for it and to avoid the delays which were involved in the inevitable paper work that goes along with these types of functions.

The personnel offices then became essentially employment offices. That function was not decentralized, although some of the other responsibilities were. Those things that could be delegated with still some overall review by the Division of Personnel, branches and staffs, then their specialties were passed over to the divisions, and this took a couple of years or so to work out. It was one of our major policy changes that appeared at that time.

CRAWFORD: Did you have to travel extensively to supervise this decentralized work?

SHELLEY: Not as much as we had before it happened, but of course, during the early period and shaking it down, there was a great deal of travel. You never get out in the field offices as much as you need to get out in the field offices, and that's where the best jobs are--whether at TVA or anywhere else--is in the field where the action is taking



place, and where you are right on the line--I mean the most exciting probably. And it's always good for the central office supervisor to get to his field and get the feel of what is happening and what the real grassroots problems are, but there is never time to do as much as you need to do. You do all you can, but you always feel that you don't get as much done as you would liked to have done or needed to do.

CRAWFORD: Our time is about up, Mr. Shelley, I know, but in your work as General Manager . . .

SHELLEY: Assistant General Manager.

CRAWFORD: . . . as Assistant General Manager. You were Assistant General Manager when you retired. Who was General Manager in '61?

SHELLEY: Mr. Wagner was General Manager before I went into the General Manager's office, when I was Director of Personnel. When he was appointed to the Board, L. J. Van Mol was made General Manager, I believe, in the spring of '61. He did not immediately appoint an Assistant General Manager. He had an "assistant to," but you know, not the full job. And then in December of '61 I went into the General Manager's office as the Assistant General Manager. Of course, he only had one Assistant General Manager.



CRAWFORD: What major issues did you deal with in your years as Assistant General Manager?

SHELLEY: We dealt with all of them that occurred during this period, and there were a number of them. The major one I recall at the moment . . . (I'm taking this back to the Director of Personnel, now, when I was heavily involved in that, and if I can digress a little I can remember it.) The major thing that developed during those years just before I became Director of Personnel and after that, was the change in the Board. Gordon Clapp was not reappointed in 1954, and later General Vogel was appointed--the first appointment of a Board member by a Republican President--and General Vogel was a military man. I think he, himself, would admit that he came in with certain preconceived ideas of TVA and those things relating back to Eisenhower's campaign remark about creeping socialism in TVA and so on, and General Vogel came in, not with any demand, but many ideas of change, and not full information on what TVA was about. As Director of Personnel, I was pretty heavily involved in this process of adjusting to a strong chairman, although we still had the majority of the old Board, but it was a period of conflict--internal conflict--and strong differences of opinion among the Board members.

Later General Vogel became completely sold on TVA. He became one of its strongest boosters and found it a very





pleasant place to work, but there was a period of two or three years of uncertainty in TVA--conflicts on the Board about a lot of things. The thing I mentioned earlier--the high degree of identification of what TVA was doing by its employees all the way down the line--this thing was felt all the way down the line--this tension that existed at that time. By the time I became General Manager we had other appointees to the Board--new ones--and this had dissipated. It was a very pleasant situation. General Vogel left, I think, as one of my best friends, and I with him, although he fired me one day. It was during the very early period; he told Paul Evans and I as we walked out the door that we were going to be fired, but I think he was our good friend after this.

CRAWFORD: And a supporter of TVA by then?

SHELLEY: Oh, yes, a strong supporter, and still is. And still I think he will say it's one of the greatest organizations he has worked with.

CRAWFORD: Well, I believe we're past your lunchtime, Mr. Shelley.







THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THIS PROJECT IS "AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY." THIS IS INTERVIEW NUMBER THREE WITH MR. EDWIN A. SHELLEY IN KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE. THE DATE IS DECEMBER 16, 1971. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE, AND WAS TRANSCRIBED BY MRS. BRENDA P. MEIER.

CRAWFORD: Mr. Shelley, in the time we have today remaining to us I would like to get into a little more detail about your work in personnel in Knoxville through the late forties and fifties, and then into your activities as Assistant General Manager in the 1960's, up until the time of your retirement. May I ask in the beginning, did you notice any particular changes in the type of personnel you used after World War II closed?

SHELLEY: Not immediately after. My experience coming back after the war was a period when TVA was reducing the large construction forces which also affected other divisions-- supporting divisions--as well because of the completion of many of the wartime projects. So immediately following World War II there was a period in which we were reducing personnel. At the same time employees were returning from service with



reinstatement rights who had to be placed. This required, in many cases, laying off current employees to reinstate employees with a more permanent status who were returning with reappointment rights from the military service.

Now, one major policy change that was effected during this period following the war for a few years was a change in TVA's reduction in force policy. The Civil Service Commission, because of the rights of veterans under which they had jurisdiction, required us to set up a new reduction-in-force policy. TVA before this time had not been subjected to the Veteran's Preference Act, and so on the one hand we were trying to place employees returning from military service, and on the other hand grappling with the departments over reducing forces, which entails grievances and all these other details there for a few years, and then a general reduction of personnel anyhow, so this was the problem, in reverse, of what we had during the war. This is one of the major things I recall during the latter period of the forties.

CRAWFORD: Did you have difficulty in getting the returning service men back into appropriate positions?

SHELLEY: No, it went rather smoothly on the whole. In many cases employees were required--those that had the





reemployment rights--to get them in a position equally as good as the one they left, which we managed to do quite successfully and in many cases they were placed in jobs of higher classification than the ones which they left. So we had no particular problems--no particular grievances--over that, but if we did have the problems, we reduced the personnel in order to make places for these. And, of course, during all this time you are still recruiting in certain scarce categories and so on.

CRAWFORD: What categories were scarce after the war?

SHELLEY: I can't recall the particulars now, but there were probably some engineering categories and usually some highly specialized-type jobs or new types of jobs that were developed. I don't recall, except that this was always with you that you have certain specialized types of jobs that you need.

CRAWFORD: Did you have difficult situations, having to let some of your employees go at this time?

SHELLEY: Yes, yes, quite a number of occasions where it was difficult to, and because of the change in our reduction-in-force procedure which occurred along during this period--it must have been about 1949 or '50--it became difficult adjusting to a new system. We had previously, in ranking



employees on the reduction-in-force list, taken into account the remaining work to be done--in determining the ranking of employees--and we lost our argument with the Civil Service Commission on that issue, which meant that employees had to be ranked on the work that they had done, which wasn't always the kind that was going to be done later. And in many cases we felt that a person better qualified for the remaining work--work that was lying ahead--was laid off when we felt that they should have been retained--and many supervisors felt that they should have, too.

CRAWFORD: Did you make any attempt to find other employment for the employees you had to relieve after the war?

SHELLEY: Yes, there were efforts made with contacts which we had with other industries and people in the Valley. TVA had always provided assistance where it could in suggesting candidates to people. Very often we were called on to suggest candidates for jobs, particularly large construction firms from outside the area, but a number of others, and many TVA alumni, as you might say, have gone to other jobs and asked for assistance, so we had these contacts for years. Of course, we circulated through various sources, as other industries did, when there would be a large lay-off imminent. We would make available through various means, biographical statements on



employees, and in many cases invited others to come in and interview the employees before they were terminated.

CRAWFORD: Did you have anyone working on that specifically, or was that done just as another function . . .

SHELLEY: Well, we may have had someone who had this assigned as a major responsibility from the central offices, but it pretty well had to be decentralized into the field--in the various offices in the field. It was just one of the things that they were expected to do where reductions were occurring.

CRAWFORD: How extensive were those reductions, and in what areas did they extend? Did they extend up through your white-collar workers and pre-management?

SHELLEY: It would vary, but I suppose to some extent some of the middle-management positions particularly and, of course, there were efforts to move between divisions within TVA when a person of good potential or ability was scheduled for reduction, and very often he could be retrained or developed into a place where there was a need for someone with his background and talents.



CRAWFORD: When did this process end? When did you get the TVA personnel force stabilized again?

SHELLEY: As I would recall, I would suggest it was fairly well stabilized by about '49 or '50, and we began some expansion again in the early fifties, and I'm not sure of the date when we began this steam plant program of building steam plants down at Johnsonville. That must have been about '48 or '49. I'm not sure of the date.

CRAWFORD: Did you need a different kind of personnel for the new steam plant work?

SHELLEY: To some extent, yes. You see, it's a different type of construction--many of the same skills, but a different mix of the skills as used on hydro-plant construction and a different cycle of construction was occurring. In the hydro-plant construction, why there is a certain cycle of certain skills doing excavation, concrete pouring, and so on, and it's different on construction. For example, in hydro-construction you would use a small number of steam fitters for example. On steam plant construction it takes a large number for a considerable period during the cycle, and a large number of boilermakers on steam plant construction, so there was a different mix, and at high peaks, large numbers for a very short period of time.





CRAWFORD: Had there been much planning ahead in TVA, anticipating this new phase of steam plant building?

SHELLEY: Well, to the extent it was necessary. It had been recognized as a need for some time. TVA built its first steam plant at Watts Bar about 1940, as I recall. It was a very small steam plant, but the real period of the steam plant construction began in 19--well, it was at Johnsonville, and I'm not sure of the date. It must have been about '49--about that time--and the steam plant construction, of course, in the plan was executed fairly rapidly in comparison with usual hydro-construction for the amount of power you could get.

CRAWFORD: At the time that you left the personnel work in 1961, did you have the staff you needed in personnel management?

SHELLEY: Yes, we had a very good staff. We had a problem during the five years that I was Director of Personnel that we were not able, during the period from 1954 because of budget restrictions in the Eisenhower administration, to bring in the number of people needed for development. And because of the budget restrictions we had older employees, some of whom had reached their level of competence, and so we had a hiatus there of several years--five or six years, or more, but



actually about eight years I guess, from '52 through '60-- where personnel and many other divisions in TVA that were financed from appropriations--not the power division--and we weren't able to bring in as many young people for development as we normally did. Normally we had had programs of management assistants and personnel assistants for development.

CRAWFORD: Sort of training programs?

SHELLEY: Training programs where we would bring in young people with a master's in public administration, say, as a personnel assistant or a management assistant, scatter them through TVA, rotate them from division to division until they were settled in the position that suited them best and suited TVA best, so we suffered from that for a while. But our division was fairly well staffed. It had been reduced because of this decentralizing process to the divisions. We didn't have as many employees in our personnel offices in the field, but a stable, competent staff when I became Director of Personnel, and I think, during that period. The one problem we had in personnel was not being able to recruit new blood, you might say.

CRAWFORD: Now, that was a problem of the fifties, wasn't it, the Eisenhower era?



SHELLEY: Yes, yes.

CRAWFORD: At the time you became Assistant General Manager I believe TVA's financial situation was somewhat improved. The Bonding Bill had been passed, I know, and the democratic administration had started again. What was the financial situation of TVA at that time, when you became Assistant General Manager?

SHELLEY: Well, it was much better as far as power construction--power facilities--were concerned. It was still tight, and it continued to be tight on programs financed by appropriations, as it has been and I'm certain still is, since 1952. It's probably not as bad as it was during one period. At one time in the early fifties, for example, it was thought that we would have to practically eliminate the Division of Forestry--knock off forestry, fisheries, and wildlife--and some of these other programs. They were saved at the last minute, but were on a reduced scale for a period of time.

Many of our program divisions financed from appropriations and had a very difficult time during the Eisenhower years.

CRAWFORD: At the time you became Assistant General Manager, though, one of the major problems had been the



division within the Board of the Eisenhower appointee and the other members. Had that been resolved by that time?

SHELLEY: I think it was fairly well resolved. Of course, there had been two or three appointees to the Board during Eisenhower, but some of them didn't stay very long-- Brooks Hays and Frank Welch and then A. R. Jones, who stayed the full term, but there was no major conflict really within the Board that I recall during this period. Things had settled down fairly well. This doesn't mean that there were not differences of opinion on many things, but the major differences were fairly well settled. We had obtained, as you said, the bond financing authority which settled many of the problems that we were faced with.

CRAWFORD: I know the difficulty with General Vogel was settled before he left office, and there was no question about his commitment to TVA. At what point do you believe that change took place?

SHELLEY: Well, General Vogel came, I believe, in about the middle of '54 and I became Director of Personnel for a year or so after that. I would think things began to settle down fairly well and we began to understand each other-- the Board members--oh, along about 1957 or '58--during that period. It might have been a little later.





CRAWFORD: What was the incident involved in General Vogel's temporary decision to fire you?

SHELLEY: Oh, there were a lot of things that even then I didn't understand. General Vogel was concerned and he didn't understand me. He first came in and he wasn't sure, I think, that he approved of TVA's labor relations policy and our negotiating with unions and things of this sort. The Knoxville Journal, which is an ultra-conservative paper, as you know--Republican paper--had from time to time taken TVA to task for paying wages they claimed were too high for the area and things of this sort, and a lot of little incidents, I think, probably led to it.

We used to have twice a year, annual meetings that the employee representatives of--what we called our cooperative conferences and committees--the trades and labor at one time and the white collars, another. And the first year General Vogel was here the white collar organization decided to honor Dr. Curtis who was approaching the end of his term, and Dr. Curtis and General Vogel had had differences, but normally we would have one board member attend those meetings, and Dr. Curtis was the principal speaker at our banquet session and the two-day meeting that we had. And General Vogel, after it was over, told me he thought it was a discourtesy to him that he was not the principal speaker.



CRAWFORD: As Chairman of the Board?

SHELLEY: As Chairman of the Board, and that wasn't the first year he was here. I'm not sure of my years, but it was along during that period, so he didn't like that. But the actual incident I mentioned arose over some publications of TVA that he thought were propaganda--just normal publications. One of the things was a news index which we published, which I'm not sure you have seen, but it's just excerpts from newspapers. This used to be published daily, I think.

CRAWFORD: I believe Bernard Foy may have done that from the technical library?

SHELLEY: Yes, but it was done in the Information Office at that time. It was really just what it said--an index of what the newspapers said. A lot of newspapers were saying things about General Vogel--you know, taking issue with some of the things that were going wrong. Well, he didn't like it appearing in print. He called Paul and I in to talk about it and some of the other publications. There were a number of other things, so we finally said, "Well, General, we think you ought to look all of these things over." He said, "I want to discontinue a lot of these things, and I want copies of every one of these sent up to me." Well, I don't know what led to the



last issues--you know the actual incident. But I think now, in looking back, that Vogel was just sort of having fun with all of that. After it was over, I don't remember what was said, but we all got our tempers up a little, and I'm not sure what the remark was, but the implication was pretty clear.

But the next day I passed him in the hall and it was as though nothing had happened. That's the kind of a guy he was, but I didn't understand him too well then and he didn't understand us. I talked to our other Board members and wrote a memorandum to the General Manager--you know, a confidential memo. That's not in the file; you know, for a temporary situation. I still have a copy of it, and it's been a long time--ten or fifteen years or so, but it was a lot of little things. But General Vogel came around, and I can recall another one of these valley-wide meetings that we had a few years later in which I was presiding at the banquet session and I believe Marguerite Owen at that one was our speaker. It was the first time we had had her down to speak, but Vogel was there and after the ceremony everybody was feeling pretty good. We had a happy hour and got some good--well not good, but jokes that were apparently funny to the General at the time, that he took it very nicely and responded in a like manner. But we had a good relationship, generally, after that.

CRAWFORD: Why do you think General Vogel changed his mind about TVA?



SHELLEY: I can't speak for him, but I think he became a part of TVA. When you have had a military background as an engineer and a regimented type of service, and when he came into TVA he found that people generally were honest and dedicated to their jobs and had a high degree of identification with it, and would give him their full support, and he became sold on what TVA was trying to do, and I think he was a strong chairman. And although it was no sudden change--it was a gradual thing that occurred that he just became a part of TVA and identified himself with TVA and with its employees.

CRAWFORD: I think it would have been very easy to be loyal to TVA. You had, I would guess, as compared to the Corps of Engineers, you had a very high degree of esprit de corps in the Authority?

SHELLEY: Yes. Another thing that I mentioned to the General after this climate had changed, and I don't remember exactly what the occasion was, but it may have been his fifth anniversary here. And some of the girls on the floor had brought in a cake, you know, with five candles. I'm not sure that it was at the fifth anniversary. We were in his office, and those of us on the 4th floor sat around and had a cup of coffee and I remarked to the General; I said, "General, I imagine this is the longest that you have ever been in one





place." And he thought a minute and he said, "Yes, that's right." You know, four years is about as long a tour as he had ever had anywhere in the Army, and he found a new bunch of people, and by then, as I say, the climate had changed completely. So he was here longer, and it wasn't as temporary a situation as he had been in before, and a more continuing program that he was closely involved in.

CRAWFORD: By 1961, then, you had a relatively stable situation at your top management in TVA?

SHELLEY: Yes.

CRAWFORD: What were the major things you dealt with in the 1960's in the General Manager's office?

SHELLEY: Let me go back for one thing. During this period when I was Director of Personnel, this was a very satisfying period for me. We fairly well accomplished our decentralization to the divisions, and it was working fairly well, and our negotiating with labor relations was on a very solid basis. Now we probably had some major problems such as problems with building Shawnee Steam Plant, which I am sure the construction people have told you about because of the situation that existed out there.



But one of the major things that I was concerned with during that period of '56 to '61 was what TVA was going to look like in the '70's, and this ties into the thing that I said earlier about not being able to bring in new blood. I could see, then, as Director of Personnel, the first generation of TVA was going to be going out in the '60's and early '70's and we would need to see TVA properly staffed, and yet we were handicapped because of the lack of funds for TVA in general to be bringing in the kind of people we needed for development and to carry these jobs. And we worked hard at this to do what we could, but it was very difficult to do. We just couldn't get the money, but it was one of our major concerns during that particular period. In the early '60's this began to loosen up and my successor continued to follow up on it. It didn't loosen up very much, but it has, I think, in the last few years improved so that they have a lot of young talent. They are people that I don't know, but I know that they are here. They began to come in (I've been away two and a half years) and some of them began to come in before I left, and most of the first generation is going to be gone pretty soon.

CRAWFORD: I'm glad that their terms overlapped, so that some of those who come into the training program now can get something from the people who were here in the earlier period.

Mr. Shelley, our time is up, because I know you have an appointment with Paul Evans.



SHELLEY: Oh, yes. My job as Assistant General Manager--we were involved in all of the issues during that time. I think those issues you will get just as well from Van Mol and others who are around and who are fairly recent.

But what I was going to say, as Assistant General Manager my job was primarily an administrative job. Everything that came into that office came to me first, and some things of major importance went on to the General Manager, but all correspondence and everything came to my desk because we had only one Assistant General Manager, and many assignments were made directly to the divisions and I handled with the divisions. Things of special importance, that needed to get to the General Manager's attention or that he needed to be informed on during the handling or before their handling, I was responsible for.

But the issues of the sixties, which is fairly recent, covered the whole range, and I wouldn't pick out any particular one during this period except one thing that I will mention, not because of my job as Assistant General Manager, but one observation that I came to during this period, which was eight years or so. It was that TVA began to lose its glamour and its appeal to people of the region, to some extent, and it culminates now when you see the Governor opposing the TVA--soundly based TVA projects. The other thing was that the decline in our influence with the Congress became very apparent and I think has continued through the period. At one time TVA



had strong support--wide support--from the representatives in the region. I have my own feelings about why this occurred that I would not want to publicize and some of the people involved. And I wouldn't want to point my finger at any one person or any one of two people, but we . . . Is this the point to say that I would like this restricted?

CRAWFORD: Yes, sir. You can restrict this entire third interview if you like.

SHELLEY: Parts of it probably I will want to. Maybe when I get the transcript I can indicate the parts.

CRAWFORD: Yes, sir. We can do that easily.

SHELLEY: Now, let me ask this off the record. Have you interviewed Marguerite Owen?

CRAWFORD: No, I've talked with her in Washington, and I'm going to see her again when up there.

SHELLEY: Has she agreed to an interview?

CRAWFORD: I don't know. Now, that's not a clear answer to your question, but she is doing a book of her own.





SHELLEY: Yes, I know. I reviewed the draft on it.

CRAWFORD: I'm glad it's that far along. No, I have no agreement to do anything except meet with her again, and whether she will be willing to talk for the record after her book is out, I don't know. I hope she will, of course.

SHELLEY: Well, I hope so too, and her book is an excellent job. She has approached it from a different way. I was one of the people she asked to review her manuscript, which I did back during the summer, and it was, I thought, close to publication then. Paul Evans and I worked with her on one or two publications. It's hard to bring her to turn something loose. She's continually changing.

CRAWFORD: She has been working a long time, I know.

SHELLEY: Yes, but if you can, get her. The first time we proposed an oral history project she opposed it bitterly, and you know the history.

CRAWFORD: Yes, sir, I know that.

SHELLEY: But she has been at the seat--right at the point--of many of these major issues. Marguerite was a most effective representative in Washington for many years.



CRAWFORD: I think in liaison with Congress, she was one of TVA's most effective people.

SHELLEY: But, and this is why I would want to restrict this because she is a very close, personal friend of mine, and I like her. She has a little tendency to rewrite history--you know, make it come out--but she could push Congress--certain people--and they were very effective. And she knew how to use them most effectively, but I think along in the fifties TVA didn't begin in its own way to develop strength in the Congress to replace these people. Lister Hill was gone and, of course, many others that were key members in the Congress that you could go to and get something done.

CRAWFORD: Perhaps you didn't have the same efficiency--the same degree of control in the Washington area that you had here. I think Marguerite operated with more independence than the people in Knoxville, certainly.

SHELLEY: Oh, yes, she had almost complete independence, and there were reasons on both sides, but there were younger members of the Congress to a reasonable extent who might have provided--might have been brought around to a great extent.

CRAWFORD: And you feel that had something to do with the loss of support in the fifties?



SHELLEY: I think now we have a new person in there who may be developing, but a lot of it is that TVA began to lose its glamour, you know--no one's concern, and it wasn't a thing to fight for like it had been in the earlier days. It's a complicated . . .

CRAWFORD: TVA was a cause in the thirties.

SHELLEY: Yes, and even in the forties, and in the fifties, but many relationships with the states changed which was one of the things I was concerned with and many of us were concerned with in the early sixties--developing better relationships with the states--and we made some efforts at that. There were many programs that TVA subsidized and got started for the states such as planning commissions and things of this sort.

CRAWFORD: The Department of Conservation, I believe?

SHELLEY: Yes, there were many of those things that we subsidized in many ways, and now have become independent and they rebelled against TVA.

CRAWFORD: Yes, the children have grown up. I noticed that some of the state departments are joining in the opposition of the TELLICO projects now.



SHELLEY: Oh, yes. And this is hard for some people to understand. There are a lot of reasons for it. The major issue today is this fact of immediate concern now--about the Governor of a state opposing TVA on something that would have received automatic support ten or fifteen years ago.













